

the language, fought with the climate, fought with a thousand difficulties. He conquered them and then died. He may truly be described as the man who gave the Bible to China. He compiled a dictionary and grammar, and threw light on the language. After his day the light became clearer year by year.

From the earliest times China has had a fascination for the Western minds. Its mystery added to the charm. Marco Polo first opened up the vague and unknown land, but his accounts were not credited. Soon others followed. The country was opened up, little by little. Christian missionaries were in the vanguard.

Soon Morrison as a translator was followed by others. There was need of revision of the earlier work, and more than one scholar attempted the task. But the missionaries were isolated, and separated from each other. Differences in rendering were inevitable; differences of view were unavoidable.

These difficulties can be understood only in the light of the nature of the Chinese language and dialects. Some leading facts must be borne in mind on this subject.

The old—the classical—language of China is the Wen-li. It is a written, not a spoken, form. Its system of ideographic signs is cumbrous in the last degree. But it is the scholar's treasury. It is the language of learning, the key to civil promotion. To know it is to be an educated man in China. The vast system of competitive examination is based upon it. The knowledge and use of it in literature is indispensable.

In this classical script five versions of the Bible have been produced. Unhappily they are variant versions. A united band of English and American scholars began a united version; but, as the work went on, a divergence of view revealed itself, and the result was two versions instead of one. The American is literal and faithful, but uncouth and foreign. The English is idiomatic and polished, but paraphrastic. It should be added that there is a simpler variety of this classical speech known as "Easy Wen-li," and that into this script versions have also been made for the less learned of the people.

The other leading language is the Mandarin. This is spoken as well as written. It is the actual language of some 200 millions. It is the commercial and every-day medium for thought and conversation. In this language also, versions have been made. But the Mandarin lacks the prestige and the classical status of the Wen-li, though it comes home more fully to the people.

As years went on, varying versions in Mandarin, as well as in the many local dialects of the country, became multiplied. There was a general feeling among scholars and missionaries that something should be done towards unification. This feeling lay deep in the minds of the Committee of the Bible Society, and to effect such a union I had the honour of attending the Shanghai Conference on behalf of our Society. The Committee thought that the time had arrived when the missionaries might be asked to devote their best scholarship and highest intelligence to the production of a Bible which would unite all, instead of being a source of division.

"You have come ten years too late," said some. "You have come forty years too soon," said others. There was a general agreement, however, that there was urgent need for an attempt at united versions, but that it was impossible to bring about the union.

Here, however, was exemplified the truth of that great law in Christian service, that whenever there is any work which should be done for God, and when men say it is impossible, the time has arrived for doing it.

The Conference in Shanghai, composed of 432 delegates, representing forty-two organizations, was full of earnestness.

Men and women had been praying, and there was a sincere desire to achieve something, but a hundred difficulties stood in the way. No details can be given now, but it may be added that when there seemed no possibility